



JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

AT

**CROSSING COTTAGE, TODENHAM ROAD,
MORETON-IN-MARSH,
GLOUCESTERSHIRE**

NGR SP 2072 3286

On behalf of

Lewis Property Renovations

APRIL 2012

REPORT FOR Lewis Property Renovations
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FIELDWORK 3rd and 18th April 2012
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CONTENTS

	Page
<i>Summary</i>	1
1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Site Location	1
1.2 Planning Background	1
1.3 Archaeological Background	1
2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION	3
3 STRATEGY	3
3.1 Research Design	3
3.2 Methodology	4
4 RESULTS	4
5 DISCUSSION	6
6 BIBLIOGRAPHY	6
FIGURES	
Figure 1 Site location	2
Figure 2 Photograph of the Site on the 3 rd April 2012 looking north	5
Figure 3 Machining on Site on the 18 th April 2012 looking north-east, in the western trench alongside the existing drain	5

Summary

John Moore Heritage Services carried out a watching brief at Crossing Cottage, Todenham Road, Moreton-in-Marsh, Gloucestershire on the 3rd and 18th April 2012, during the ground work for the foundations and access road for two new houses. No archaeological deposits, features or finds were identified.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Location

The groundwork took place on land (hereafter referred to as ‘the Site’) east of the A429 on the northern outskirts of Moreton-in-Marsh, Gloucestershire (NGR SP 2072 3286; Figure 1). The Site consists of a curvilinear narrow plot of land approximately 115m long and up to 18m wide, bordered to the north by Todenham Road, to the east by residential properties fronting onto Blenheim Way, to the west by the brick and corrugated iron light industrial buildings of agricultural equipment and architectural salvage firms, and to the south by the rear yard of the salvage firm. Most of the eastern edge of the Site is formed by a large open drainage ditch.

The Site is situated on land at *circa.* 125-130 metres above Ordnance Datum (OD) that slopes towards the south, with the underlying geology consisting of Wolford Heath Member flint-rich sand and gravel. The development work involved the removal of topsoil and made ground in order to create horizontal foundation levels for two houses, and a sloping access road to them.

1.2 Planning Background

Cotswold District Council granted planning permission for the construction of two new dwellings on the Site (ref. 10/03807/FUL), and due to the potential presence of below-ground archaeological remains, a condition for an archaeological watching brief was attached to the permission as advised by the Senior Archaeological Officer of Gloucestershire County Council. A *Written Scheme of Investigation* (JMHS 2625/01) was prepared which outlined the methodology by which the archaeological watching brief would be carried out.

1.3 Archaeological Background

The Site is situated near the northern edge of Moreton-in-Marsh (NGR SP 2072 3286), near known archaeological and historical assets recorded on the Gloucestershire Historic Environment Record. A 1997 evaluation *c.* 100m south-east of the Site identified pits with prehistoric pottery and flint (HER 19824), and excavation in 2003 in advance of new housing at Beceshore Close recorded a Middle Palaeolithic handaxe and Mesolithic microliths in residual contexts (HER 30294), but also a Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age ditched enclosure with four roundhouses, a waterhole and pits (HER 27448), and additional pits outside the enclosure.

Romano-British field system ditches and enclosures were also revealed by the 2003 investigations by Cotswold Archaeology (HER 30391), and the Iron Age or Romano-British settlement of Batsford Camp (HER 360) is located 500m to the north-west of

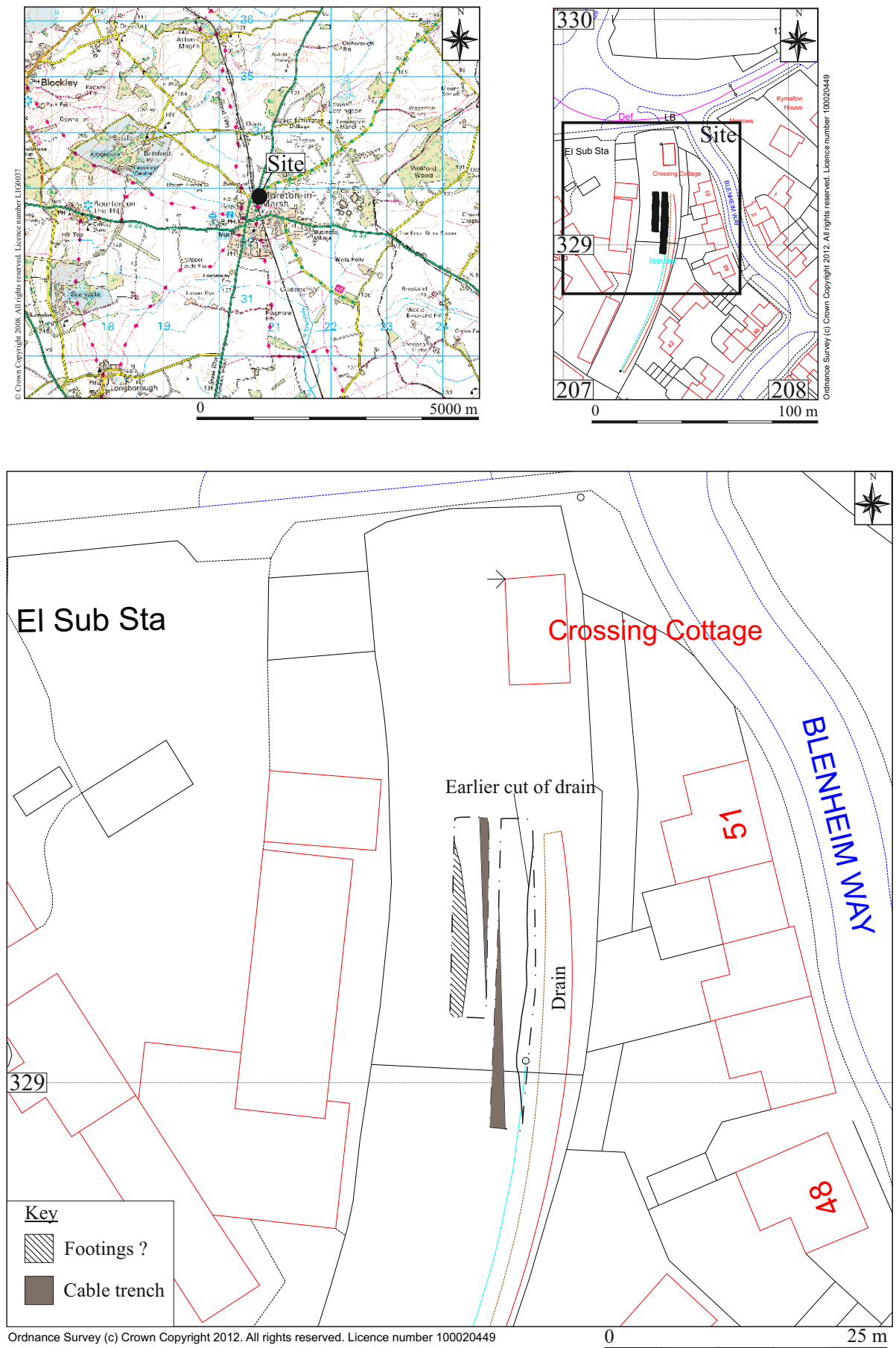


Figure 1. Site location

the Site. This is located just to the west of the Fosse Way (HER 6491) Roman Road.

The open area excavations to the south-east of the Site also produced medieval evidence including a series of small paddocks later replaced by a large enclosure, along with several pit clusters, a waterhole and the remains of a medieval building (HER 30396). Evaluation trenches further to the east of the excavation revealed further evidence of settlement continuing into this area (HER 35149 and 35151), and historic aerial photographs have shown that traces of medieval or post-medieval ridge and furrow survived in this general area too until the later 20th century, as well as to the north of the Site.

The 17th century Grade II Listed Blenheim Farmhouse is situated less than 100m to the west of the Site, whilst the northern edge of the historic town is *c.* 200m to the south-west. The Site contained part of the Stratford and Moreton Tramway (HER15487) that was opened in 1826 from ‘The Wharf’ at Moreton to the Stratford on Avon Canal, and this was later used as part of the GWR branch line from Moreton-in-Marsh to Shipston-on-Stour (HER 15488), opened in 1889 but closing in 1960.

2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION

The aims of the investigation indicated in the Written Scheme of Investigation were as follows:

- to investigate and record any archaeological remains that will be impacted on by the development, and in particular and prehistoric or Romano-British remains associated with the nearby activity;
- to take samples of any significant palaeo-environmental deposits that may add to the understanding of the Site and locality;
- to provide a report on the results of the watching brief.

3 STRATEGY

3.1 Research Design

An archaeologist would be present on Site during the course of any groundwork that had the potential to reveal or disturb archaeological remains, including any reduction in ground level, excavations for services and any additional intrusive works.

Any archaeological deposits and features revealed would be cleaned by hand and planned before being excavated and recorded at an appropriate level. Archaeological features or other archaeological remains such as a concentration of artefacts would have written, drawn and photographic records made of them. Where archaeological features were exposed during any reduction in ground level but were otherwise unaffected, these would only be recorded through written descriptions and plans, whilst any surface finds would be retained. Where archaeological features or remains would be impacted by any groundwork, then sufficient work will be done to date, characterise and record the remains in accordance with the project objectives and in

line with a sample excavation strategy. Any variations to this would be agreed with the Senior Archaeological Officer of Gloucestershire County Council who would be consulted for advice.

If an 'unexpected discovery' was made the Senior Archaeological Officer of Gloucestershire County Council would be notified as soon as possible. Initially consideration would be given to preservation *in situ*, but if this is not practical then such discoveries may give rise to a salvage excavation. The Senior Archaeological Officer will advise on methodologies and resources that will be made available to conduct such an excavation following agreement with the client.

Site procedures for the investigation and recording of potential archaeological deposits and features were defined in the *Written Scheme of Investigation*. The work would be carried out in accordance with the standards specified by the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA 2008).

3.2 Methodology

Standard John Moore Heritage Services techniques were employed throughout, involving the completion of a written record for each deposit encountered, with scale plans and section drawings produced where appropriate.

4 RESULTS

Unfortunately, the developer began ground-work on the Site without an archaeologist being present, and a visit by a JMHS staff member on the 3rd April 2012 found that the footprint of the southern building had already been excavated to a depth of over 1.5m deep into the natural subsoil (Fig. 2).

In consultation with the County Archaeologist it was agreed that a watching brief should still take place on the undisturbed areas of the Site, and a JMHS archaeologist was therefore present on Site on the 18th April 2012 to monitor invasive groundwork reduction in advance of the construction of the access road and the second dwelling. All resulting surfaces were inspected for any significant archaeological features. The ground reduction was undertaken using a small tracked Kubota KX101.3a 1.5 tonne 360-degree mini-digger equipped with a 1.50m toothless ditching bucket.

Two trenches approximately 1.5m wide were excavated parallel to one another, and also parallel to the line of the existing open drainage ditch. The presence of a modern cut for a large electricity power cable necessitated that a baulk up to 1.5m wide was left in between the two trenches, although the cut of this cable trench was nevertheless still partly exposed in plan on oblique alignments within each trench (Fig. 1). The modern topsoil and overburden was 0.35-0.40m thick, and was heavily disturbed by roots. Both the topsoil and the underlying made ground deposits contained large quantities of modern gravel, clinker, glass and metal slag, modern brick and tile fragments, modern glass and metal fragments and other such waste material.



Figure 2. Photograph of the Site on the 3rd April 2012 looking north, showing the large quantity of material removed without monitoring at the southern extent of the development area, and the large open drainage ditch along the eastern boundary.



Figure 3. Machining on Site on the 18th April 2012 looking north-east, in the western trench alongside the existing drainage ditch. The line of the modern electricity cable cut is visible at the left side of the trench, and the earlier drainage cut at the right.

In addition to the cable trench, the sinuous line of a rectilinear feature on the eastern side of the eastern trench was identified, up to 0.30-0.40m wide as exposed in the bottom of the trench, and filled with dark grey-brown clayey silty loam and gravel (Fig. 3). Parallel to the extant drainage ditch, it was almost certainly an earlier cut of the drain that had silted up prior to the more recent recutting. It was planned but not excavated as modern brick and tile fragments, modern glass and porcelain fragments and several modern iron bolts and fittings were identified in its fill, and these finds were not retained.

Along the western edge of the western trench, the edge of a large, straight-edged rectilinear cut was partly visible, backfilled with gravel, limestone and flint chippings, and containing modern clinker and glass slag. This was either another large service trench, or perhaps the footings for an unknown, demolished building of late 19th or 20th century date. This was planned but not excavated.

No archaeological features or deposits were identified. The undisturbed natural subsoil consisted of orange or orange-brown sandy gravel, but very little of this was actually visible on the 18th April. Much of it had been truncated by modern features or heavily disturbed by roots.

5 DISCUSSION

No archaeological features or deposits were recorded during the watching brief. The only artefacts identified were 20th century in date, mostly as unstratified topsoil and made ground finds. The area observed on the 18th April appears to have been heavily disturbed by modern service trenches and root action.

The standing section left by the earlier machining along the western side of the Site was visually inspected on the 3rd and 18th of April, but no archaeological features, deposits or finds were identified. This area will be reinforced with sheet piling.

The design of the development now appears to have been altered, and the second dwelling will apparently now be constructed on a reinforced and piled raft built over the existing drainage ditch (Mr P. Radbourne pers. comm.), to the east of the original proposed position. This will be partly within the footprint machined on the 18th April, but also within a rectangular slot cut into the easternmost, opposite side of the drainage ditch. The sides of the drainage ditch were also visually inspected for archaeological features, but none were visible. Any further groundwork in this area is thus unlikely to disturb any archaeological remains.

6 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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